

ERIC Document Resume		See Instruction Sheet		DATE OF RESUME 8/3/65		DATE RECEIVED 7/26/65	
A. PUBLICATION DATA							
1. ERIC NUMBER ED002581		2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S). N.A.		3. IDENTIFICATION NO. N.A.		DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW	
4. AUTHOR(S): Beetle, David H.				MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE YES ☒ NO ☐			
5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: The Road to Integration				COPYRIGHT GRANTED YES ☒ NO ☐			
6. PUBLICATION TITLE: The Daily Press, Utica, N.Y.				COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED YES ☒ NO ☐			
7. EDITOR(S): N.A.		8. PLACE OF ORIGIN Greenburgh School District, 475 West St. Hartsdale Ave., City, State Hartsdale, N.Y.		TYPE OF REPORT PROPOSAL ☐ IN-PROGRESS ☐ FINAL ☒ FOLLOW-UP ☐			
9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE The Daily Press, Utica, New York		10. VOL. NA		11. PAGES N.A.		12. MO./YR. 11/64	
		13. TOTAL PP. 6		TELE. EXT. INST/LOC CODE		OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:	
						ERIC SATELLITE CODE	
B. INDEXING DATA							
14. SUBJECT AREA				15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR newspaper articles			
16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)		bussing practices		integrated teaching staff			
Princeton Plan		community action		interracial materials			
				racially balanced schools			
17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS) The Greenburgh School District No. 8 was one of the first areas in the nation to begin the practice of bussing pupils around to eliminate segregated schools. This mixed rural and suburban district had developed a brilliant example of integrated education before it felt the strength of court decisions or state education departments. The stage was set for balanced schools in 1932 when a Negro minister won an election for a school board position. At that time there was an elementary school in a low-income area which was almost 99 percent Negro and another school in a middle-class rural area which was almost all white. By 1950, the Negro school was half empty and the predominantly white one packed to the doors. The alternative to a costly building program was some reshuffling of pupils. Despite threats, severe criticism, and great tension, and backed by heavy supporting action by a community citizens committee, a plan of complete school integration was adopted. During his public school career, a Greenburgh youngster attends five schools, according to what is called the "Princeton Plan." He starts with all other children of the same age in one kindergarten and then attends separate schools for all children in grades 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6. He then moves to a completely integrated junior-senior high school. Each school building represents a cross section of the entire district, with a very stable student ratio of 36 percent Negro and 64 percent white. The teaching staff is between 18 and 19 percent Negro. A biracial reader series, interracial committees to plan extra-curricular activities on the secondary level, and library interracial reading and audio-visual materials are part of the integration program.							
ERIC No.		18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT					
C. FUNDING DATA							
19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION				20. DIVISION OR DEPT.		21. CONTRACT NO.	
						PROJECT NO.	
				22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT			
				23. DURATION OF PROJECT		U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education	

GREENBURGH SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 8
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
475 West Hartsdale Avenue
Hartsdale, N.Y.

ARTICLES FROM THE DAILY PRESS. Utica, N.Y. November 1963.

The Road to Intergration.
Story of Greenburgh is Cinderella-like.

(The idea of bussing pupils around so as to eliminate segregated school s is often under vigorous attack. Yet a mixed rural and suburban Westchester district started doing it long before it felt the hot breath of court decisions or education departments. Here is the first of four articles describing the project and its results.)

By David H. Beetle - Special to the Press.

Greenburgh -- This is a Cinderella story from Westchester.

Greenburgh district 8 until a few months ago was just a poor (by Westchester standards) little central school tucked away among White Plains, Hartsdale, Ardsley and Elmsford.

It was so small the State Education Department wanted to do away with it by merging it with its neighbors.

It was looked upon as an odd-ball district that bussed students around so as to mix up the races. Only the most way-out schoolmen dropped around to look it over.

But then came its handsome prince -- in this case state education commissioner James E. Allen Jr., with a directive that those districts with segregated schools come up with some plan for integration.

Suddenly the department -- well it still thinks it's too small -- hailed it as a brilliant example of integrated education.

Schoolmen for miles around began beating a path to its door. The mail piled up faster than the school could answer it. Invitations for staff members to appear on panels multiplied. Sarah Lawrence College asked to send over some of its students as practice teachers. Applications for faculty jobs zoomed. They are now running at about 12 for each vacancy as compared with a par four in places nearby.

"Actually we're so pressed by people who want to know what we're doing it's difficult to get time to go ahead with our plans," says Dr. George E. Fitch, supervising principal.

What Greenburgh has -- and has had for some 13 years -- is what people call "the Princeton plan."

In some ways, though, it goes further than Princeton. More schools are involved.

To get through the system from top to bottom, a Greenburgh youngster goes to five schools. He would start with 300 other kindergartners in the one-time mansion of Felix Warburg -- the focal point of a 168-acre estate the Warburg family gave the school district. Next he'd go to a school that has only first

ED002581

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ED002581

and second grades -- 10 sections of each. And from there, in turn, to grades 3-4 and grades 5-6 schools. Then he'd wind up in junior-senior high.

The housing is about as segregated as you'd find. Many of the Negroes crowd a six-block somewhat blighted area. Their families came there in 1915 to work on the Kensico dam -- and stayed. Others -- Negroes in somewhat higher income brackets -- came much more recently and tend to dominate certain blocks. But there is nothing segregated about the school. Each building represents a cross-section of the entire district: roughly 36% Negro and 64% white. Indeed the elementary school is just that. The kindergarten gets only about 30% Negroes because whites have been moving in faster. The high school runs 40% Negro -- partly because more white drift off to private and parochial schools. What's more each class is as intergrated as the school. Dr. Fitch surveyed his elementary sections last spring and found none were off the 36-64 ratio by more than two percent. "And that's because you can't cut a child in half," he said jokingly. But the joke suggests a truth about Greenburgh 8 -- not even U Thant finding a middle way between East and West is more determined not to take sides. Even with tenure to contend with, the teaching staff is already between 18 and 19 percent Negro. The "plan" as Dr. Fitch sees it, isn't as expensive or as cumbersome as you might think.

He figures he busses 85 percent of his 2,500 pupils; would have to bus 65 percent anyway even if his present elementary buildings were set up as neighborhood schools serving pupils through grade 6, and no youngster spends more than 15 minutes on a bus. The district's overall transportation cost runs to \$120,000 a year out of a budget of nearly \$3 millions. Of this, he estimates \$20,000 to \$25,000 as the cost of "intergration." It is a cost toward which the state pays 80%. Moreover there may be a few savings. "You don't have to equip each elementary school with a library suitable for kindergarten and the first six grades," he points out. "The most you have to set up for is two grades." The same goes for other class room materials. Thus a piece of equipment suitable for occational use in one or two grades doesn't have to be duplicated several times. The new Juniper Hill School, for example was built entirely for "little peopel" -- first and second graders. It has little chairs, little tables, little wash basins, a little auditorium with a little stage, even a little backstop in the playground. And when the youngsters get on a school bus, the older ones don't pick on them. They're on another bus. But in many ways, as fascinating as the Greenburgh plan itself is the way it came about.

Negro Cleric led way to "Balanced" School.

(The north has its segregated problems, too. One of them is what to do about schools that are almost 100% Negro. Here's No. 2 in a series of four articles telling how a mixed rural and suburban Westchester district faced up to the problem long before it became a national issue.)

Greenburgh --- Greenburgh District 8 back in 1950 had an elementary school in a low-income area that was almost 99% Negro. It also had another school in rather lush, rural Westchester that was almost all "white". It is the sort of "musn't"touch" set-up that many school boards would have lived with for years. But idealism, thrift, and practicality interfered. The stage may have been set in 1931 when a Negro minister, the Rev. Louis W. Hughes decided to run for the school board. He lost. In 1932, he tried again. As such things go, it was a relatively quiet campaign. Only one fiery cross was burned on a Westchester hillside. Election night, the whites told the Negroes they'd better not stick around for the final count because one of their homes was on fire. It wasn't true -- and the Negroes didn't budge anyway. Hughes won -- first of his race to serve on a school board in the state.

The next move came in 1947 when a Negro broker, Philip Jenkins, teamed up with a white mutual fund executive, Robert Driscoll, to set up a citizens committee to improve the schools, whether they were intergrated or not. "That's all we had in mind at first," Jenkins recalls. But by 1950, the Negro school was half-empty and the predominantly white one packed to the doors. A couple of other buildings -- both mixed racially -- were also involved. Clearly the alternative to a costly building program was some reshuffling. The board came up with four plans -- only one of which would integrate the virtually all-Negro school. This plan involved a lot of bussing. What's more the board decided it was "too hot to handle." Instead, they proposed a "middle way." But they underestimated the power of a 30-man citizens committee. By now it had a key crusader spotted in each of 14 community associations. Incessantly its members pleaded for complete integration. They made an almost house-to-house canvass for support. They argued before each association far into the night, and 13 of the 14 associations "went along." "This time the community was ahead of the school board," says Jenkins.

It wasn't easy, though. There were threats and anonymous phone calls, and there were parents who shouted "I'm not prejudiced, but ..." "Things quieted down, though, when it became apparent the majority was on our side," Jenkins summarizes. Not the least of the crusaders was the quiet-voiced, prematurely-gray principal, Dr. Richard J. Bailey. He died a few years later at the age of 49. Friends think the task and the tension were too much. One of the schools has been named in his honor. "I'm glad we did it when we did," says an elementary principal who grew up in Greenburgh. "There was less emotionalism then than now." "There was a lot of idealism went into the campaign," another resident says. "You can't overlook that. But at the same time some whites who felt their youngsters might end up in a predominantly Negro school preferred to settle for a balanced enrollment in all of them."

Asked how other school boards might also face up to the same problem, Greenburgh schoolmen and civic leaders had a number of answers. "The important thing is to talk things out thoroughly; get everything out in the open," says Arthur Startz, vice president of the Better Business Bureau and now school board chairman. "It's a matter of commitment," believes Dr. George E. Fitch, supervising principal. "Once you get the community committed to the idea of integration a lot of your problems are solved." "The first thing you have to do is to give white people the assurance that an integrated school will be a good school," affirms Mrs. Phyllis Shearer, a housewife and one of the two Negro attorneys on the district's present six-member board. "In an all-white school the parents will take for granted that a school is good. In an integrated school you're on the defensive. You have to prove it." Greenburgh has also discovered that getting physical integration -- the placing of negro and white pupils under one schoolhouse roof -- was only the first step. "Back in 1950 we had a non-segregated school system; today we have an integrated one," says Dr. Fitch.

Mixed School Bound to Present Problems. Third article of series.

Greenburgh Negro and white teen-agers in Greenburgh District 8 were very much concerned this fall that the prom numbers include music that youngsters from each race liked. "I assume that your prom committee is inter-racial," said their advisor. "I assume..." echoed a white youngster. "It is," said a Negro girl. The assumption was a safe one. It would be hard to find a school that is more inter-racial than Greenburgh. The prom discussion itself took place at an inter-racial seminar conducted as an extra-curricular activity for any pupils of both races who want to drop around. Many do. And if any inter-racial problems arise

that the school has overlooked they get talked out there.

On this occasion regret seemed to be rampant that when white or Negro students look in at a dance and see only the other race dominant they sometimes don't go in. "It's more of a problem in junior high than in high school," the group decided. As they left to enter the waiting buses, a Negro girl said to two white friends: "I told you if you came you'd enjoy it."

Greenburgh District 8 has roughly one third Negro pupils and two-thirds white pupils not only in each school but in virtually every class. In the library seminar room where the inter-racial seminars are held, the magazine rack contained three copies of "Life" and two of "Ebony". On the bookshelves are "Goodbye to Uncle Tom," "The Late George Apley," "The Nature of Prejudice," and "An American Tragedy" all cheek by jowl. On the bulletin board are Playbills from "Fiorello," "Raisin in the Sun," "The Sound of Music," and "No Strings." In the kindergarten scrap books tell the story of white and Negro life equally. Some dolls are black; some white. In the first and second grades, teachers bolster their talks on community life with slide sequences -- slides the school made itself by taking pictures of both White and Negroes in the school district. It had to; it couldn't buy any.

The youngsters use the Detroit bi-racial reader series. It depicts children of all races. At assemblies both races participate. At college nights, Howard is invited as well as Columbia. Negro pupils draw people whose faces are dark. This is "progress". They didn't used to. School plays are cast without regard to color. On the desk of Dr. Siani Waxman, the elementary supervisor, was a film strip, "The Races of Man" and a record "Great Negro Americans." "We scour the country to find interracial materials," he says. This inter-racial approach -- so evident to anyone visiting the school -- also has a lot of sub-surface depth. Any new teacher who gets hired goes through a five-hour interview to determine the absence of racial bias. "Of course I'm patient and I realize that slum area children can't go ahead too fast", is a good answer if you want to work somewhere else. So is: "I prefer to work with bright children." Once hired teachers may not get contracts renewed if there is the slightest evidence either race gets a bad break.

Sectioning by ability is, of course, out. Dr. George E. Fitch, the supervising principal, likes it that way regardless of the race issue. He thinks such sectioning deflates some egos; inflates others; is destructive to both. A former Athens, Pa. schoolman, he taught classes in a small high school that brought together students with a wide range of ability. He himself grew up in a one room school. He believes a good teacher with a class of only about 25 can do enough individual work with each pupil to keep all of them advancing. And he thinks the youngsters benefit by contact with others who may be brighter or more backward. He also thinks a teacher needs the help of psychologists, remedial experts, and social workers. At Greenburgh 8 she gets them. The school has a full-blown state-aided "Project Able" project with a twist of its own. It was set up following an NYU study showing that the pupil from low income areas may be as bright as a new dollar but often lacks the experiences and vocabulary which youngsters on the other side of the tracks acquire by aged 5. Thus Greenburgh has concentrated its efforts on kindergartens. Last year it found 46 out of 300 of them needed special attention; pulled them out of class in small groups for from 10 minutes to half-an-hour saw that they got the help they needed. At the year's end all 46 tested within the normal range. "We think such children can catch up faster than was first supposed", says George Nemith, language consultant. "This year we hope

to inject some of the same techniques into the regular curriculum and get the same results without special grouping." Indeed, it is "results" all along the line that Greenburgh has been seeking. Its schoolmen -- and apparently a goodly number of the parents -- are convinced that it is getting them.

Greenburgh District 8 Blazes New School Trails. Fourth article of series.

Greenburgh District 8 is a bit like an adventurous swimmer who lonesomely plunged into a mountain tarn, found the shock less than expected, and is now shouting "come on in, the water's fine." One could expect that if there were anything basically wrong with bussing children around so as to get completely integrated schools, Greenburgh -- which started it 12 years ago -- would have gone through some pretty rough times. Its citizenry might have voted down a few school budgets. They didn't. They might have rejected bond issues. They did once (par for any school district) and then changed their minds. All told in the 12 years they've backed a \$5. to \$6. millions expansion program which involved building both a new elementary school and a junior - senior high school (previously they contracted with White Plains.) The elementary school was so located that it virtually committed the district to continue the so-called Princeton plan of integration. Yet few opposed it on those grounds. The normal cry of the whites has been that their youngsters will be held back by the presence of blighted-area children of any race. Yet Dr. George E. Fitch, Greenburgh's supervising principal, reports median achievement among classes in his school is a year ahead of national norms. He acknowledges studies that suggest New York State's median is ahead of the country by two to three tenths of a year; notes that this still leaves him a margin of at least seven-tenths. And he is getting his results with an enrollment that's about one-third Negro. The district finds dropouts in its now three-year-old high school "insignificant"; reports its vandalism costs well below Westchester's par.

Recently when Greenburgh 8 got a chance to vote a merger with two all-white districts (Hartsdale, Elmsford) the citizenry turned it down anyway, Hartsdale favors the Princeton Plan. Then there are other things. "When Negro children go from a segregated elementary school into an integrated high school, they tend to form a group by themselves and take little part in activities," says Mrs. Phyllis Shearer, Negro housewife, lawyer, and school board member. By contrast of course, those going to Greenburgh's new Woodlands High School have known only integrated classes since kindergarten. "Of course there are some transfers from those who move in from all-white or all-Negro schools, and it does take them time to fit in completely, says Bernard Gaughran, a history teacher turned extra-curricular advisor and human relations student. It's his job to see that Negroes take part in all school activities -- which they do. "I'd give up this job today if the elementary schools weren't integrated," he says. "It would be too tough." White parents gathered recently at a thoroughly-integrated high school PTA meeting expressed satisfaction. "I'd want to put this system in even if we didn't have it" said one woman thoughtfully, wife of a New York commuter who edits a house organ. "My three boys have gone to school here and they take race for granted. Otherwise they would have grown up with a barrier which I wouldn't want them to have." "The school must be good," beamed one mother. "My daughter was accepted by seven colleges." "It works and it's the path we must go in America," said the father of two Harvard sons. "There are no hurt feelings; the school runs smoothly and is well organized;

we've got a plan and we know where we're going," summarized another parent, a member of the state chiropractic board. "Every experience you have in life is a teacher. That's why we didn't want a lily-white neighborhood. We moved back in the district after leaving it."

One gathers that there has been a fair amount of house shuffling. Some die-hard opponents have moved out -- whatever the reason. Others like them remain and grumble. Most of those who move in with children do so with their eyes open. "I had one mother almost in hysterics when she brought her son to school and found so many Negroes," Miss Grace Schmidt grades 1 and 2 principal, says. "I don't know how they could have bought a house without knowing. Anyway the boy is getting along fine." On one occasion, a Greenburgh principal was taken aback when a middle-income Negro mother objected that her child had Negro teachers. Just what the inter-racial situation specifically does for a child is sometimes hard to pin down. Unhappy incidents in which race is an issue, though, are rare. Occasionally a first or second grader gets mad and dips into his pre-school prejudices to disparage a Negro playmate.

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